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PHONETICS.

Elements of Phonetics, English, French, and German, translated by WALTER RIPPMMANN from Professor Viëtor's *Kleine Phonetik*, published by J. M. Dent & Co., London, 1899.

This handbook of Phonetics has been in use long enough for one to have tested it carefully in class. The present notice is meant to draw attention to some of its excellences and faults, and to make a few suggestions for those who may desire to employ the work. Most of the points which we shall criticize are matters of detail; some, more important, are simply the inheritance of past scholarship; almost without exception these latter points are here presented in a less objectional form than elsewhere. Our quarrel, then, in these cases is not with the translator or author, but with their predecessors.

The Elements of Phonetics, be it said at once, seems to us the best handbook in English treating the three languages mentioned above. That there could be an improvement in the typography of the work, in the succession of paragraphs, in the English, and in the punctuation, is clear from a cursory examination. Still, these are minor faults, as compared with the real excellences of the book, which presents the least complicated, the most easily understandable development of the subject to be found in the English tongue.

The text is preceded by a cut of the organs of speech, drawn from Luschka's *Der Schlundkopf des Menschen*, a cut somewhat ghastly in appearance, but superior decidedly to that in the original of Viëtor. The same cut has already been utilized by Michaelis and Passy in their *Dictionnaire Phonétique*.

The first twenty sections of the work were prepared by Mr. Rippmann himself, save a few passages, such as section 3, which is taken from paragraph 4 of the *Kleine Phonetik*.

We shall now mention in order of presentation a number of points in this valuable little volume.

Section 3. The author states that exhalation is better adapted to speech than inhalation, because it is the result of the diaphragm returning to its natural position. It may be doubted whether this is a sound explanation. It is likely that, other

things being equal, that phase of breathing which was most under control of the muscles would be best adapted to speech. That phase, as the author says, would be inhalation. We might better say that the expiratory stream of air is best adapted to speech because speech is meant to carry sound to a distance from us. We avail ourselves of the stream that is moving in the desired direction. To carry well, the sounds (especially the consonants) must be made from within out.

Section 15, second paragraph. This statement, strictly speaking, is not true, since the organs might be in the position indicated in simple breathing. The words: "in the production of a sound," inserted after the word "If", would make the statement more accurate.

Section 16. We find here the familiar statement that the passage through the nose is invariable. While this is true of the nose proper, it is not true of the nasal passage, if this be taken, as it should, to include the space above the soft palate. This space is decidedly variable, and should be taken into consideration. We shall observe throughout this book, as in all phonetic works for that matter, a great lack of knowledge of the functions and movements of the soft palate. For instance, sections 13 and 14, give in reality a wrong idea of the action of the soft palate. We quote: "In breathing, the velum hangs down as a rule, leaving a free passage for the air on its way through nose, pharynx, larynx, windpipe, bronchial tubes and lungs. In speaking, on the other hand, the velum in most cases closes the nasal passage completely by pressing against the back surface of the pharynx; the breath can then pass through the mouth only. In some sounds, however, the velum is lowered." From reading these sentences no one could obtain a true conception of the rapidity and frequency of the movements of the soft palate in speech. The words "In speaking, on the other hand, the velum in most cases closes the nasal passage completely," are the most objectionable part of the statement. A beginner might suppose that the soft palate in speech receded and remained glued to the wall of the pharynx. Or, he might even suppose that in the case of some speakers this was done, and not in the case of others. To be sure, this erroneous impression is somewhat corrected later, but the general effect of this passage

is disastrous. Where the mistake is made is in contrasting speech, which is most variable and active, with sleep, in which the organs are at rest. The passage could easily be amended by changing "in most cases" into "in most sounds."¹

In this same section, occur the familiar terms "blade" and "front", applied to the tongue. These terms are objectionable, if for no other reason, because they might be interchanged: that is, they have not the distinctiveness which should characterize scientific terms.

Section 32. It is stated in this section that when the glottal click is energetic, we have what is known as clearing the throat and coughing. This language needs some modification, for the glottal click is always unvoiced, whereas the two acts mentioned are nearly always accompanied by voice. Again, in the glottal click, as we have found by scores of tracings, there is always recession of the soft palate. One may, however, clear the throat with the mouth closed, in which case there is no recession of the soft palate.

The diagram preceding page 28 presents the familiar vowel triangle in all its glory. A glance is supposed to tell one the elevation of the tongue in a given vowel, the lip opening, the position in the front, middle, or back of the mouth. A person looking at this diagram for the first time might suppose that Phonetics was an exact science, yet this is not true. To this extent, the presentation of such a diagram in all of its fixedness and definiteness, is unfair and unscholarly. It may be doubted whether a scientific man who had spent a full year investigating Phonetics, could look on this diagram save with pity or contempt. To illustrate what we object to in this frequently printed diagram, we read with regard to it, in section 50 as follows: "We regard that a as 'pure' or 'neutral' in which the tongue position coincides with the intersection of the u-a line and the i-a line." This language has the true mathematical ring. It is apparently as scientifically accurate as one of the familiar theorems: "If from the middle points of two opposite sides of a

parallelogram lines be drawn to the vertices of the angles opposite, these lines will trisect the diagonal that joins the other two vertices." As a matter of fact, Phonetics is not an exact science, and probably never will be. These assumptions of scientific accuracy are the heritage of the English school of Phonetics. They are much attenuated in the volume before us, but they are still objectionable. As for the diagram in question, it contains undoubtedly some truth, considerable even, but it is not a sidereal chart nor a chemical formula.

Section 36. We are told here that the resonance of the mouth depends (a) on the position of the tongue; (b) on that of the lips. It would be well to add: (c) on that of the soft palate.

Section 43, second paragraph. It is stated here that towards the close of the long English u the lips are brought so closely together that consonantal w results: *too* is to be written *tu:w* or *tuw*. The editors of the hand-book deserved no censure for writing in the traditional way the transcription of the long u. What strikes us, however, is the insufficiency of the transcription. We doubt if a scholar living a thousand years hence could obtain even the approximate truth from this notation. In the first place, we are told that the lips approach so near that a consonantal w is produced. To produce w, the lips must certainly withdraw suddenly, yet we know that this does not happen. A speaker makes the first half of a consonantal w, but the second half, the part that, so to speak, gives birth to the consonant, is lacking. The result is at best a half-consonant. Again, are the editors sure of their own minds in regard to this sound? We read the concluding sentence of the paragraph and are in doubt: "It is therefore not a single sound, but a diphthong." Let it be said that no alphabet that men could design could ever represent scientifically the pronunciation of English. It is the part of wisdom, then, to offer with due qualifications any attempt to write phonetically this language. What, for instance would a foreigner make of one of the notations for *useful* on page 35: *juwsful*?

¹ Section 16 is to be compared with the next to the last paragraph of section 19, and with the second paragraph of 22. In the latter passage, the words "articulations of mouth and nose" seem to imply that there are articulations of the nose, or at least some one articulation.

Section 73. It is here said of French nasal vowels: "The nasal character of these sounds is so evident because the velum is lowered considerably." This sentence would be more accurate if the last word were omitted. As a matter of fact,

experiments have shown that the velum, although varying slightly from one to another of these four vowels, is very low in all of them, and may occupy in one of them a position lower than that of rest.

Section 75. The statement made here concerning *h* is the one so frequently repeated since Whitney, that *h* is in reality the breathed form of the succeeding vowel. If this is true, the phoneticians should have the courage of their convictions, and should write *ha* as *aa*, just as they write the French *prisme* with the sign of voicelessness under the *m*. This theory of *h* seems to us unacceptable. The matter would be easy to examine with instruments, but no one as yet, we believe, has carried out such an experiment.

Sections 80 and 82. The uvular *r* is here described and is said to be the regular sound in French. This last is perhaps going rather far, although the sound meant is dominant at Paris. As to whether the Parisian *r* is in fact the uvular *r*, one may be pardoned for having doubts. It has appeared in tracings taken of this *r* that the soft palate and the back of the tongue draw towards each other for an instant. These organs do not seem to remain in semi-contact long enough to produce a rolled consonant according to the description given in paragraph 80. On the contrary, the consonantal effect seems to be brought about by the sudden drawing asunder of the two organs.

Section 173. The ordinary pronunciation of *enivrer* is here given and also: *anivre*. We cannot remember ever to have heard this pronunciation.

Section 148. This section is superior in the original, since it is there clearer. In the second and third paragraphs, the semicolons should be replaced by commas. The punctuation of the succeeding paragraph is slovenly.

Section 158. The last sentence is interesting as indicating the authors' views concerning Experimental Phonetics: "Accurate results can obviously be obtained only by mechanical methods." The original bears the words: "Genauere Resultate," p. 88. The utility made, however, of Experimental Phonetics in this volume is not a peculiarly happy one. That is, the diagram on p. 117 (p. 91 of the *Kleine Phonetik*), means very little to the uninitiated, and perhaps less to the initiated. It

would have been much better to have omitted this diagram, as also that on p. 125. We read on p. 117: "The accent of a long vowel in an 'open' syllable (*e. g.* *du*) has been ascertained by means of the cymagraph." In the first place, it seems preferable to spell the last word *kymograph*. In the second place, to say that these tracings have been taken with a kymograph is like saying that a piece of cloth has been measured with a ruler, when what we desire to know is the texture of the cloth. The kymograph is simply the revolving cylinder covered with blackened paper on which tracings have been made in some way, just how we must be told for us to derive any real knowledge from the diagram, or even to understand it. What was the instrument with which the tracings were made?

The authors employ the alphabet of the Association Phonétique Internationale, which is the best phonetic alphabet that we possess. There are, however, three important points in this alphabet that seem to us inaccurate to a surprising degree. It is the use of one sign for the vowels of the English words *lord*, *law*, *not*, and for the French vowels in *robe*, *dot*, *or*; that of one sign for the English and German vowels in: *boot*, *book*, *du* and *und*; and finally the use of one sign for the English and German vowels of: *beet*, *bit*, and *mir*, *mit*. To be sure, some careful writers place at least occasionally a diacritical mark over the vowels in *but*, *und*, *bit*, and *mit*. An Englishman who is taught that he is to use the vowels of *law* and *not* in the French words *or* and *dot*, can never learn a proper pronunciation, no matter if he is being taught by a phonetician. Similarly, a Frenchman who is given to understand that whether he uses the so-called open or close vowel in *but*, *und*, *bit*, and *mit*, should be forgiven if he speaks English and German with a heavy accent. The difference between the vowels of *beet* and *bit* is so great that there should be two separate signs, and the same is true of those of *boot* and *book*.

It will be noticed that in general our criticisms of the book before us have borne upon points where it follows the traditional teachings. In conclusion, we desire to repeat what we said at the beginning, that the *Elements of Phonetics* is the best handbook in English treating of the three great modern languages. The value of a careful

course with this book as the basis of study is incalculable for any one who intends to become a teacher of spoken languages.

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OLD FRENCH LITERATURE.

The Three Days' Tournament, a study in romance and folk-lore, by JESSIE L. WESTON. London: David Nutt, 1902.

Miss Weston, favorably known to students of mediæval literature from her two studies¹ on the legends of Gawain and Lancelot, has added a third to her series which equals, if it does not surpass, the others in ingenuity and interest. Like all works, however, which draw on modern folk-lore for an explanation of bygone romance, the present study has a ring of strained plausibility to it which should warn those in any way inclined to take Miss Weston's suggestions as established facts. To justify that step, we should first need 'das gesammte beweisende Material,' as the author would doubtless herself admit.

The Three Days' Tournament is an episode common to several romances of the close of the twelfth century. The first work in which it is found is the *Cligés*² of Crestien de Troyes, though here Miss Weston affirms the original three days have for some unaccountable reason been extended to four. The episode occurs next in the *Ipomedon*³ of Hue de Rotelande, then in the German *Lanzelet*⁴

¹ Numbers VII and XII, respectively, of the *Grimm Library*.

² Vv. 4575-4985. Cligés fights successively Segramor, Lancelot, Perceval and Gawain. Crestien's intention was evidently to let his hero measure arms with the doughtiest knights of Arthur's court, hence the tournament is extended beyond the usual time. The Champagne poet brings all of his heroes at some time of their career into relation with Gawain; in *Erec* (vv. 4060 ff.), for instance, an illustration is given of Gawain's insight into human nature (his *san*), and here in *Cligés* his skill with the sword (cf. *Chevalier à l'épée*) and his courtesy are shown.

³ Cf. Kölbing: *Ipomedon in drei englischen Bearbeitungen*, Breslau, 1889.

⁴ Cf. Hahn: *Lanzelet, Eine Erzählung von Ulrich von Zatzikhoven*, Frankfurt a/M, 1845.

and finally in the large French compilation, the *Prose Lancelot*.⁵ Professor Foerster in his usual dogmatic way asserted⁶ that Crestien invented the story and that the other versions are mere borrowings from the original, as found in *Cligés*. To this summary treatment of the question Miss Weston objects, and it seems for good reasons.

In the first place the versions differ too markedly among themselves to be inter-related in so simple a way. Secondly, the *Cligés* form has all the appearance of being a very late version⁷ instead of the parent of the other versions. And, thirdly, it is probable that the original hero of the tale was not Cligés but Lancelot.⁸ The author, therefore, proposes a genealogy with an unknown version akin to the *Lanzelet* as the source, and the other forms of the story, including the *Cligés*, as the derivatives. Thus Crestien, instead of being the originator of this story, was but a poor imitator of it; in the words of Miss Weston, he "muddled" it.

So far, so good—Crestien we admit had no regard for the sanctity of his sources; in more cases than one we know he tampered with them, sometimes he did so successfully, as in the *Perceval* where he produced a notable literary effect, more often unsuccessfully, as in *Erec* where his "muddling" is apparent. Nevertheless, if Crestien was not—unlike Miss Weston and, as she affirms, Walter Map⁹—interested in folk-lore, he was to a considerable extent interested in what is higher; namely, the problems of life.

We come now to the more speculative side of Miss Weston's study. Hue de Rotelande concludes his version of the episode in question with the verses 29-30:

"Sul ne sai pas de mentir lart
Walter Map reset ben sa part."

Miss Weston's active mind at once associates these words of Hue with the fact that a version of the

⁵ Cf. P. Paris: *Romans de la Table Ronde*, Vol. III, p. 233 ff.

⁶ Cf. *Karrenritter*, Halle, 1899, p. xliii.

⁷ Cf. *Three Days' Tournament*, pp. 37 and 38.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 19.

⁹ Miss Weston's words (p. 44) are: "Had he (Map) lived in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, instead of the twelfth-thirteenth, Map would undoubtedly have been a prominent member of the Folk-Lore Society."